



June 26, 2024

Dear Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

RE: Toronto Island Park Master Plan - item IE15-2

The Stewardship Committee of the Toronto Island Community has been working with City staff since the City announced more than seven years ago that it was going to undertake the creation of a new Master Plan for the Island Park. We can all agree that a new vision and plan are needed.

We very much appreciate the time, effort and commitment of staff and consultants in the process and recognize that there was much engagement by stakeholders and the public in the process. There are many good things in the Master Plan and the extensive consultation was needed given the uniqueness of the island and its importance for so many communities.

While we respect and value the efforts that have gone into consulting with many diverse communities and feel the plan has done an excellent job listening to so many different voices, as a group concerned primarily with environmental stewardship, we feel a strong responsibility to ensure a central voice for nature in any changes to the Island Park. We believe the report as it stands now does not put nature first.

The Islands are home to an increasing range of wildlife species -fish, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, birds, and mammals –as well they provide vital stopovers for over 300 species of birds during migration. The Toronto Island Park is arguably the most biodiverse park in the City's park system. It supports rich wildlife communities (including the first nesting Bald Eagles in 80 years). As the City's own Natural Heritage Background Report indicates, it contains regionally rare plant communities and landforms. The City has recognized the significance of many of the environmental features and species on the Island by designating six Environmentally Significant Areas. The island also includes a Provincially Designated Wetland.

This biodiversity is fragile. Along with human disturbance, the vegetation communities and landforms must survive high winds, wave action and changing water levels (both high and low water). And these systems are underlain, not by soil or bedrock, but by sand. In recent years, the City has spent millions of dollars to undo the effects of wave action, high water, and human overuse on the Islands.



We believe that protecting, enhancing, and celebrating this biodiversity should be front and centre of any future vision for the Toronto Island Park and its implementation. It should be the lens through which all future initiatives are undertaken, initiatives such as hardscaping, event planning and setting of people capacity limits. How many world class cities have such a unique natural wonder just minutes offshore from the city's downtown?

While the planning engagement process did a comprehensive job listening to the preferences of diverse human communities, such a process, by virtue of consulting human stakeholder groups, does not necessarily advocate adequately for nature. Nature could not be consulted, so those of us who care for it must speak up on its behalf and so we request that in parallel with this master plan a Nature First policy for the island be articulated that would ensure that this special place will continue to provide the natural habitat for the many species that call the island home. It will ensure that it continues to be a special place for people to engage with nature for generations to come.

We recommend that the I and E committee should ensure that there are ALWAYS strong voices advocating for nature on the TIMP Advisory Group now and in years to come. We also recommend that an overarching, guiding principle should be that nature on the island is its most important asset and that future uses, and infrastructure should only proceed if they enhance and protect the fragile environment, flora, and fauna on the island.

We believe that this guiding principle would continue to make the Toronto Island Park a jewel in the Park system and meet our obligations for future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Farebrother', written in a cursive style.

Tony Farebrother,
On behalf of the Stewardship Committee